

IC 77-2427  
14 February 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Distribution

FROM:

[REDACTED]  
Acting Chief, Production Assessment  
and Improvement Division

SUBJECT: The B Team Report on Soviet Objectives

1. [REDACTED] asked PAID to give him an independent assessment of the B Team critique of the Community's performance.

2. Attached is a draft response that is based on our review of the relevant estimates since 1960.

3. We would appreciate your comments.

Attachment:  
Draft Response

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DRAFT

THE B TEAM REPORT

Soviet Strategic Objectives: An  
Alternate View

Introduction:

The purpose of this memorandum is to briefly assess the value, validity and significance of the B Team Report. It attempts to give some judgment on the contributions of the B Team exercise and to determine whether the report should be revered damned and discarded, or taken as a useful but unsteady step in the right direction.

The B Team report, "Soviet Strategic Objectives: An Alternative View" was requested to provide an independent look at the data available for the drafting of NIE 11-3/8-76. The study was designed to determine whether or not the data could reasonably support an alternative, more threatening, view of Soviet strategic objectives and intentions than that developed by the traditional NIE process. This approach was recommended by the PFIAB a year ago as a way of assessing the credibility of some anxiety over Soviet behavior on the part of a growing element of responsible US observers of Soviet military and foreign policy.

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The membership of the B Team was selected by design from the group of critics who strongly believe that the long run goal of Soviet military policy is more threatening than generally recognized and fully consistent with the Marxist-Leninist expectations of Communist-world domination. The hope was that, with reasonable scholarship, such a team might be able to develop from the same body of data available to NIE drafters a logical and well-documented basis for their alternative view. Unfortunately, this did not come to pass.

The B Team has produced an alternate view; but it is asserted, not documented. Even when it scores debating points by challenging the weak underpinnings of present and past NIEs, the B Team memorandum offers little in the way of well-referenced, authoritative bases for its contrary interpretations. Moreover, the report lacks perspective and reflects little understanding of the intelligence process and the influence of changing priorities and source materials that tend to channel analytic efforts. Nevertheless, we find the B Team report to be a disturbing portrayal of the intelligence record, one that calls for careful review and corrective action by all members of the Intelligence Community.

Our review of Soviet military estimates since 1960 and knowledge of the Community's analytic output in the more recent years support much of the Team B criticism. Their assessment does lack documentation,

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and their charge that intelligence consistently underestimated Soviet objectives and intentions is far too simplistic. But the central theme of their protest against the Intelligence Community is close to the mark: intelligence does not put enough effort into analysis of the pertinent available data to try to understand the Russian mentality and the motivations that lie behind Soviet military policy.

#### The B Team Position

The causes of the Community's failure to understand Soviet long run objectives are, in the eyes of Team B members, endemic to the intelligence system and procedures that have been operative over the past 25 years. The Team B report notes five important causal factors for the Community's inaccurate appreciation of Soviet intentions. A brief comment on each follows:

##### (1) Lack of attention to soft data.

Hard data is generally taken to mean demonstrable fact, as noted in photography, intercepted communications and telemetry, or unambiguous documentary information on government decisions and policy. Soft data, on the contrary, lacks precision, is incomplete, and is usually open to various interpretations. The writings of Soviet military commentators, much clandestine reporting and SIGINT data, and most open source material fall in this category. Soft data

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requires substantial amounts of analysis and molding with hard data in order to develop reliable interpretations. Even so, controversy prevails where uncertainty remains.

Soft data is the guts of the evidence on Soviet strategy and intentions, and much of the Team B critique is based on the accusation that the Intelligence Community pays only slight attention to it. A review of the estimates since 1960 indicates a cyclical treatment of soft data, in both estimates and analytic memoranda and reports. There was a substantial deemphasis on the study of soft data during the latter 1960s, and a reemphasis during the 1970s. The return to soft data analysis was due in part to:

- pressure from Andy Marshall, Jim Schlesinger, and others.
- a desire to provide more credible interpretations of the hard data.
- more "reliable" documentary information, most notably on Soviet ground forces.
- sensitivities of the US/Soviet military balance put premiums on analysis of force effectiveness, doctrine and intentions.

Since the early 1970s both DIA and CIA have restructured analytic entities to focus more resources on military issues demanding more attention to soft

data. But the rebound in analytic capability has been slow because data bases and skilled manpower had atrophied over the years. Moreover, as indicated in our recent Semiannual Review of Intelligence Production, the consumer continues to demand "hard fact" reporting and this alone absorbs the efforts of a sizeable portion of the available analytic manpower.

(2) Mirror-imaging distorts US intelligence appraisals of Soviet objectives.

In general, mirror-imaging means that the military goals and policy decisions of other countries are brought about by the same factors, aspirations and values that motivate US policy decisions. Specifically, Team B accuses the Intelligence Community of seeing both Soviet and US leaderships appalled by the obvious destructive outcome of a strategic nuclear war and therefore both leaderships motivated to:

- prevent nuclear war through policies of assured destruction of the other side.
- limit the size of nuclear forces beyond that level which guaranteed a sizeable retaliatory capability--either parity or sufficiency.
- press for arms control agreements.
- move toward a <sup>mutually satisfactory</sup> balance of US/Soviet forces and a policy of detente.

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Team B states that US intelligence has wrongly imputed these motives to Soviet force planners and that, to the contrary, any comprehensive study of the data available on Soviet strategy and intentions will show that the Soviets believe in the eventual superiority of Soviet forces and the creation of a war-winning (as opposed to deterring) strategic force posture. While such a conclusion may be open to discussion, the charge of mirror-imaging is sustained in our review of past estimates. Again, the US fallback on mirror-imaging, where applicable, to describe Soviet motives can be blamed on deficient analysis of soft data that can often provide a more realistic appreciation of Soviet motivation and objectives. For example, the Community did incorrectly assess the prevailing Soviet military thinking on the requirements for Soviet missile forces. The estimates viewed the Soviets as wedded to a policy of assured destruction and estimated that this would lead the Soviets to be satisfied with a general parity of strategic forces. In retrospect, we now know, from more recent review of the soft data then available, that the Soviets had toyed with a doctrine of assured destruction in the Khrushchev period but had discarded it in the middle 1960s in favor of more traditional Soviet military strategy and doctrine. (Had we paid more attention to the development of the Soviet Rocket Forces as an extension of artillery-- in soft data--we would have been more prone to anticipate a Soviet desire for preponderance rather than parity.) To a degree, mirror-imaging also affected the US assessments of Soviet civil defense and



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the probable constraints of defense costs on expansion of Soviet military forces. There are, on the other hand, specific areas in which the B Team perceived mirror-imaging which is not substantiated by the IC Staff review. For example, the estimates rather freely discussed the differences between the US and Soviet approaches to some weapons and program strategies--ASW and directed energy, for example--and reached conclusions at odds with the findings of Team B, not because of uncritical mirror-imaging, but on the basis of analysis.

(3) Piecemeal assessments of Soviet weapons programs.

There is validity to the B Team finding that there is rarely an integrated overview of the interrelationship among the various Soviet weapons programs. There are two aspects to the issue, however, that have affected the Community's performance. Because of the size and complexity of the Soviet military establishment, and the disparate needs of US consumers, separate estimates have to be made on the different forces--naval, ground, air, rockets, etc.--in order to create fairly compact statements on each force on a timely basis, usually annually in response to the Administration's demands over the past several years,

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each of these/estimates has become a fairly complex package with a concentration on capabilities and operations rather than on objectives. There have been few attempts during the 1970s to develop an estimate of Soviet military policy and objectives--an overview of a Soviet long run military plan--primarily because there was little demand for it. Defense seemed satisfied with comprehensive force estimates and NSC Staff and State expressed disinterest in the Community's views on Soviet policy--a fact we noted in our recent Semiannual Review of Intelligence Production.

But the more telling aspect of the B Team critique is their view that Community estimates of Soviet military policy and were not very useful because they failed to analyze the available data. There is truth to this finding. There are few Community experts on Soviet affairs and they can rarely find time to dig deep and reflect on the relevant documents on Soviet military developments. Our review of the policy estimates--especially the 11-4 series on Soviet policy and objectives--finds them to be rather descriptive essays with little in the way of penetrating, rigorous analysis of the forces at play. The best that can be said is that the readers of an 11-4 estimate become aware of an unrelated array of Soviet force improvements. This is not to say that the B Team analysis of Soviet objectives is correct;

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it is to say that the necessary incisive analysis of the rather sizeable quantities of information on Soviet policy has not been carried out.

(4) Unsupported net assessments.

Net assessments in the context of the B Team report are defined as judgments on the balance between US and Soviet military capabilities based either on static indicators or dynamic analysis of wargaming scenarios. The B Team is right in saying that such assessments are made both implicitly and explicitly in the national estimates without the benefit of supporting analyses. But not all net assessments in the estimates are unsupported. Our review of several recent estimates shows reasonable support for the net judgments in about half of the occurrences. For example, NIE 11-3/8-75 states: "We believe the Soviets would conclude that the US could preserve the survivability of most of its alert bombers against attacks by SLBMs throughout the next ten years." There was no explicit support for this assessment and, in particular, no analysis of Soviet capabilities to deny reasonable warning time. On the other hand, the assessment of a growing Soviet threat to US ICBM silos was based on quantitative analysis of specific numbers of R/Vs per silo and a range of force projections.

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There was a tendency in the early 1970s to become quite liberal in scattering assessments, often unsupported, in the Key Judgments section of estimates. There appears to have been a feeling within the Community that the user deserved simplified statements relevant to the significance of a very complex mass of data. The Community was well aware that such judgments were often not supported by specific analyses but the analytic components were reluctant to take on the appropriate detailed studies because they require special competence, are time-consuming and rely heavily on US military data. More recently, the Community has behaved more responsibly, and in the 1976 estimates has done a reasonable job of explicitly stating the basis of its net judgments. And, of course, the DCI's memo to PFIAB on this subject two weeks ago stipulated that NIE judgments based on net assessments should be clearly labeled as such, and that the basis for the net judgments should be clearly specified.

(5) IC Bias.

It is difficult to accept the Team B charge of implicit collusion with policy leadership. Team B finds that "on some occasions the drafters of NIEs display an evident inclination to minimize the Soviet strategic build-up because of its implications for detente, SAL negotiations, Congressional sentiments as well as for certain US forces."

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While it is true that the NIEs over the past several years have contained a number of statements that <sup>incorrectly</sup> minimized the Soviet strategic build-up, the explanation can be as much a result of shortsighted concern on the part of the estimators with the analysis of the near-term build-up of Soviet forces as a reflection of policy pressure. For example, the minimization of the eventual Soviet missile build-up during the latter half of the 1960s was based on a variety of well-assessed factors that were considered operative at the time. The analysis relied heavily on the duration of the extant deployment programs, the obsolescence of the missile systems being deployed, the observed R&D programs, the anticipated requirements for qualitative modifications to the existing forces, and the demands of competing programs. It was these factors, not political pressure, that under<sup>b-1</sup>by what turned out to be inaccurate projections of Soviet forces. If there was a problem, it was that there were hypotheses as to why the program would cease but no <sup>firm</sup> data and little analysis to actually gauge operative constraints within the Soviet armament industry--a condition that still exists because of the general lack of attention to this sort of analysis.

The B Team is more lenient with its criticism of the estimates during the 1970s and finds no suggestion of bias. Presumably, if the judgments are "correct" in the eyes of the B Team, the methodology

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is faultless. Our review of the estimates showed no clear change in analytic and estimating methods during this period, but it did detect a slow change in the Community appraisal of the Soviet threat. The estimates changed, not at the speed demanded by the apprehensive, but slowly, in response to a continuous and perhaps more rigorous review of the evidence. It is difficult to find a reasonable cause for the changing intelligence estimates on the Soviet threat other than constant reappraisal of the evidence at hand.

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